12 September 2007

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2007

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Anthony **Andanje** (Kenya)

III. Meetings management/improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

C. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

Introduction and overview

1. At its 484th meeting, on 10 September, the Committee on Conferences considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States (A/62/161, paras. 35-41). The percentage of such meetings provided with interpretation had fallen from 87 per cent in 2005 to 77 per cent in 2006 because more meetings had been requested and because calendar bodies' better utilization of conference services had resulted in fewer cancellations and therefore less residual availability. In the previous year, acting on the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/236, the Secretariat had identified two options to overcome the problem. The first, to earmark specific resources to make conference servicing for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States more predictable, had not been pursued. The second, a "piggyback" plan whereby the Department in New York allocated specific services on a weekly basis, had been put into effect as from 1 January 2007. While that option seemed to have had a positive effect, it was unlikely to offer a permanent solution. In the absence of a mandate from the Assembly earmarking specific resources to service such meetings, the Department could see no further innovative or cost-free options to satisfy requests for services from regional and other major groupings of Member States.

07-50343 (E)

Discussion

2. The Committee expressed concern that, as time went on, increasing requests for meetings and more successful efforts to use conference services efficiently would leave less and less capacity to reallocate to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States. Some delegations wondered whether all possible approaches had been explored and whether enough effort was being devoted to finding long-term rather than ad hoc solutions. The "piggyback" option only succeeded if financial resources remained in step with the increasing demand for conference services. If resources were cut off at an arbitrary level, breaking that dynamic, the operation of the intergovernmental bodies would suffer doubly from a lack of conference services and from a lack of essential input from regional and other major groupings of Member States.

3. In answer to a request for an assessment of the resources which would need to be earmarked to service meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, should the mandate be amended and such an option be envisaged, the representative of the Secretariat said that just such an assessment had been made in the form of an estimate of programme budget implications provided several years previously (A/58/397). However, that option had not been pursued by Member States. The services continued, therefore, to be dependant on cancellations, which were unpredictable, and had no other solutions to offer. It was for the Committee to decide if it wished to rely upon the "piggyback" approach in the long term or to explore other methods.